

ESF 15: Public Information

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1.0 Introduction

Coordinating Agencies:

- Lewis & Clark County Disaster & Emergency Services (LCCO DES)

Primary Agencies:

- Lewis & Clark County Disaster & Emergency Services
- City & County Commissions
- Law Enforcement Agencies
- Fire Services
- Public Health

Support Agencies:

- All City & County Agencies
- Capitol City Amateur Radio Club (CCRC)/Amateur Radio Emergency Services (ARES)
- Local Media
- Montana Disaster & Emergency Services (MTDES)
- FEMA

1.1 Purpose

Emergency Support Function (ESF) 15 – Public Information is responsible for keeping the public informed concerning a threatened or actual emergency situation and to provide protective action guidance as appropriate to save lives and protect property.

This plan supports the Incident Command System (ICS) Public Information Officer (PIO) function and the Joint Information System (JIS). The JIS function is to coordinate information before its release to the public and the news media.

1.2 Scope

ESF 15 resources coordinate actions to provide public information support to local incident management operations and elements. It identifies the support positions necessary for coordinating communications to the general public. This ESF applies to all local agencies within Lewis & Clark County that may require public information support during emergencies or disasters.

Many agencies have designated Public Information Officers (PIOs) and existing departmental emergency public information plans and procedures/guidelines. ESF 15 is not designed to take the place of these plans, rather it is designed to compliment and support the departmental staffing and procedures/guidelines already in place.

1.3 ESF Activation & Plan Maintenance

ESF 15 may be activated independently or in conjunction with other ESFs, depending on the needs of the situation. The ESF 15 Coordinating and Primary Agencies will be responsible for review and revision of this annex.

The primary responsibility for development and maintenance of this annex is that of LCCO DES with support from all supporting agencies and departments.

This annex should be reviewed and revised annually, unless significant changes warrant earlier revision. Continued and regular revision and updating should keep this document valid and useful. Regular testing and exercising should establish the groundwork for efficient and expeditious delivery of assistance in times of emergency or disaster.

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1.4 Policies

- ❖ Lewis & Clark County will endeavor to release timely and accurate emergency information to the public concerning emergency preparedness, response and recovery.
- ❖ Life-safety information and instructions to the public have first priority for release.
- ❖ Mission assignments to departments or jurisdictions for public affairs should be agreed upon by those entities prior to an actual emergency or disaster.
- ❖ Lewis & Clark County and its incorporated cities and towns are entitled to release information concerning their emergency actions. Any releases prepared by the EOC, city, or town which quote or mention another jurisdiction should be coordinated with the respective jurisdiction before being released.
- ❖ This annex is effective upon approval.
- ❖ All appropriate governmental and volunteer agency resources should be used as available.
- ❖ All services should be provided without regard to economic status or racial, religious, political, ethnic, or other affiliation.
- ❖ The County's response during incidents, emergencies, or disasters is based on the availability of resources. If the response requirements go beyond local capabilities, mutual aid, state, and/or federal assistance should be requested.
- ❖ All requests from appropriate local jurisdictions to the state for medical and public health assistance should be assumed to be valid.
- ❖ All organizations are responsible for the development and maintenance of their own internal operating and notification procedures. No part of this annex is intended to supplant agency SOG/SOPs.
- ❖ All organizations are responsible for filling any important vacancies; recalling personnel from leave, if appropriate; and, alerting those who are absent due to other duties or assignments.
- ❖ Personnel designated as on-scene responders or representatives to the EOC should make prior arrangements to ensure that their families are provided for in the event of an emergency, so to ensure a prompt, worry-free response and subsequent duty.

2.0 Situation & Assumptions

2.1 Situation

- ❖ Lewis & Clark County is vulnerable to a variety of hazards. Media outlets exist which, if effectively employed, can be used to inform the population of the events that are occurring and how they may best take action to them.
- ❖ During periods of emergency, the public needs and generally desires detailed information regarding protective action to be taken for minimizing loss of life and property. There are times, however, when disaster strikes without warning and the public information system cannot react rapidly enough to properly inform the public about the hazard. For this reason, it is important that prior to the occurrence of an emergency, the public is made aware of potential hazards and the protective measures that can be employed.
- ❖ The Emergency Alert System (EAS) is activated as the principal means to disseminate emergency warnings and priority emergency instructions to the public. The Emergency Alert System replaced the Emergency Broadcast System as the primary digitized warning system for a three county area, which are Lewis and Clark, Jefferson, and Broadwater Counties. The system is designed to provide a 24-hour warning point to the public for emergencies and disasters. KMTX Radio Station (950 AM) is the primary station, with simulcast capability to the other participating local stations. KMTX and the local dispatch center have generators, to enable broadcasting during power outages.
- ❖ Target notification of affected areas is also used for public alert & warning.

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2.2 Assumptions

- ❖ Emergencies and disasters may occur without warning at any time of day or night, and may cause mass casualties.
- ❖ A public education and information program will help save lives and property during emergencies and disasters if the public knows how to prepare for them.
- ❖ In an emergency situation, the public will demand information about the emergency and the protective actions to be taken.
- ❖ Local print and broadcast media will cooperate in broadcasting, publishing, and posting on the web detailed disaster-related instructions to the public.
- ❖ Normal means of communications in the affected areas may be either destroyed or largely incapacitated; therefore, only limited and incomplete information is anticipated from the disaster area until communications can be restored.
- ❖ Responding agencies will provide information to reduce public concerns about the incident and response activities.
- ❖ Sufficient trained support personnel will be available to help coordinate public information and interface with the media and other agencies.
- ❖ Demands for information from media outside the jurisdiction will be significantly increased in a disaster.
- ❖ State-level news releases should be coordinated with the designated County PIO and not conflict with local-level releases.
- ❖ Rumor control procedures directed by the designated County PIO should prevent incorrect information from affecting emergency response activities.
- ❖ The EOC PIO maintains listings of media contacts and Emergency Alert System (EAS) networks and relies on those contacts and networks for the dissemination of Emergency Public Information.
- ❖ During a county-wide or large disaster, a Joint Information Center (JIC) may be established to coordinate the dissemination of information about all county, state and federal disaster response and recovery programs.
- ❖ Information is one of the first casualties of a disaster. Rumors often abound and information is usually sketchy at best. It may be hours before officials know the facts. The lack of information or contradictory information may cause confusion. The public may accept as valid rumors, hearsay and inaccurate information which may cause unnecessary fear and confusion.

3.0 Concept of Operations

3.1 General

- ❖ The local agencies of Lewis & Clark County are committed to a proactive public information program before, during and after a disaster or emergency.
- ❖ Emergency notification to citizens should be made as soon as possible via the automated Emergency Alert System (EAS), target notifications, mobile PA systems, and local radio/TV broadcasts. The DESC or his deputy should activate the EAS by contacting the NWS (449-5204 or 406-453-4561 / 2081) to initiate a public broadcast message.
- ❖ As soon as possible, updates and important information should also be placed on the relevant City and County websites (Public Safety, Public Health, etc.)
- ❖ Lewis & Clark County public information and education programs should endeavor to:
 - ◆ Provide support during the four phases of emergency management: mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery operations.
 - ◆ Provide the public with accurate, timely, and easily understood event-related information concerning protective actions, route restrictions, health notices, and emergency assistance information.

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- ♦ Control rumors.
- ♦ Coordinate information releases with all participating public and private agencies, emergency responders, and all levels of government to support public officials and media representatives in satisfying the public's demand for accurate and consistent information.
- ♦ Limit public information activities to County-specific events and actions. Federal and State governments are responsible for information related to their jurisdictions.
- ❖ The County's Incident Command System (ICS), Emergency Operations Center (EOC), and Joint Information Center (JIC) should support public information, not further complicate it.
- ❖ The designated County PIO or an alternate may serve as spokesperson for the EOC and/or the Incident Commander (IC) during an emergency situation. Organizations not represented by the EOC may use their own PIO but should coordinate messages through the EOC or JIC as appropriate.
- ❖ The designated County PIO should issue news releases on behalf of the county after coordinating current information with other agencies. Member(s) of the EOC and cooperating partners should receive copies of all releases. EOC and/or IC approval may be required before issuing policy-related news releases. All press releases should also be posted to the city/county web site.

Joint Information System (JIS)

- ❖ The Joint Information System (JIS) describes all public information activities being conducted regarding the event, including those outside the EOC and the JIC (i.e., public information functions being carried out at the scene and from departmental offices or other remote offices and locations).
- ❖ The ESF 15 Coordinator should work to establish communications with all Joint Information System (JIS) components to facilitate the exchange of information. The use of an organized JIS should help to ensure interagency communication and the release of consistent information.
- ❖ As part of the JIS, the on scene agency PIO should address media representatives at the incident site and keep the EOC and the JIC informed of these briefings. Contact with JIS components will be maintained primarily by telephone and radio.

Joint Information Center (JIC)

- ❖ The Joint Information Center (JIC) is a physical location where PIOs from organizations with primary disaster involvement come together to coordinate and disseminate information.
- ❖ The purpose of JIC is to :
 - ♦ Gather and coordinate information and serve as the “hub” for the release of timely, accurate, consistent and useful disaster related information
 - ♦ Allow all involved organizations to speak with “one voice” providing consistent messages to the public
 - ♦ Enable the EOC Team to concentrate on emergency decision-making and refer all media and public inquiries to the JIC
 - ♦ Ensure the ability exists to answer direct inquiries from the public
 - ♦ Monitor media coverage to verify the accuracy of information being disseminated
 - ♦ Be proactive in responding to the disaster related information needs of all audiences
 - ♦ Develop and implement a comprehensive public information strategy to gain and maintain public trust and confidence.
- ❖ In most cases, the JIC will be located in close proximity to the County EOC. However, it may be located anywhere to support emergency activities. Wherever it is located, it is imperative that the JIC maintain contact with decision makers and/or the EOC via telephone, radio, the internet, facsimile and/or face-to-face communications.
- ❖ Once a JIC is established, news releases, instructions, or official information originated by the various participating organizations should be channeled and verified through the JIC to ensure less risk of conflicting statements.

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- ❖ The JIC is designed to be flexible to accommodate the unique requirements of any emergency or disaster situation and its structure and staffing should be customized for each response. For example, a major event would require JIC activation and full staffing, while a smaller event might only require one or two people performing all of the necessary tasks.
- ❖ Regardless of the incident, the function of the JIC remains essentially the same, while the number of departments and agencies involved as well as the location and the quantity of information to be disseminated will vary greatly.
- ❖ At a minimum, the following functions must be performed regardless of these variables:
 - ◆ Establish and maintain contact with local radio, television and print media;
 - ◆ Develop and disseminate written information such as news releases, fact sheets and other reports as needed;
 - ◆ Schedule news conferences or interviews with department heads and other officials; brief them if appropriate;
 - ◆ Provide interview opportunities that meet the unique needs of each medium (television, radio, print);
 - ◆ Establish and maintain a communications link or a Joint Information System (JIS) with field PIOs and all remote sites performing public information activities;
 - ◆ Monitor the information being released by the media to ensure appropriate information is being released and take steps to correct any inaccurate information;
 - ◆ Exchange information with elected officials, voluntary organizations, industry representatives, State and Federal PIOs and all other involved agencies as the situation dictates;
 - ◆ Provide ongoing information to and coordination with County, City, State and Federal elected officials.
- ❖ PIOs working in the JIC retain the autonomy to represent the public information needs of their respective agencies, while working closely with the EOC Team and/or JIC to ensure consistent information is being disseminated in a timely manner by all departments.
- ❖ The PIOs working in the JIC have two primary functions: (1) carry out the public information activities of their respective departments and agencies and (2) provide support to and assist with the overall JIC mission.
- ❖ Designated departmental PIOs may be asked to staff various JIC functions regardless of the level of involvement of their respective departments. This should ensure an adequate number of PIOs are available to support emergency public information activities.
- ❖ The JIC should be declared operational when the designated County PIO, or alternate, is present, as well as sufficient personnel to perform incoming inquiries and administrative functions. The county [JIC Initiating Checklist](#) is found in Attachment 4.
- ❖ The JIC, when operational, should serve as a location where most incident-related inquiries from the citizenry may be directed. Some inquiries, such as those involving claims, may be routed to another location.

Public Inquiry

- ❖ If a JIC is not operational, a Public Inquiry Center (PIC) should be established to provide a single point of contact for the general public to call and receive current, accurate information regarding a specific event or threat. The DESC determines the need for a public inquiry operation in a disaster or emergency situation and initiates activation of the PIC based on that need. The DESC also manages and coordinates staffing of the PIC using trained volunteers.
- ❖ Currently, the Lewis & Clark County PIC consists of three “information hotline” telephones staffed by volunteers in the EOC as available.
- ❖ The PIC serves a dual purpose. It *disseminates* information by responding to requests from the public and *gathers* information by identifying trends, inaccurate information, misunderstandings, or misperceptions reported by the public or reflected by their inquiries. If the misunderstanding indicates an isolated concern, the PIC staff should address the matter directly with the caller. If a pattern of confusion emerges, they should notify the JIC (*if operational*), which then addresses the situation through the news media using traditional tools

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such as news releases and news conferences. If the JIC is not operational, the operator should notify the DESC to take action.

- ❖ Until the EOC is activated and the PIC Hotlines are operational, answers to queries from the public should be provided by the DESC, coordinating with the ICP as able.
- ❖ The telephone number for the PIC Hotlines should be released to the local news media for dissemination to the public by the EAS.
- ❖ Emergency information should also be posted and updated regularly on the County and City websites.

Rumor Control

- ❖ Rumor control is vital during emergency operations. Sensitive or critical information must be authorized and verified before release. Unconfirmed rumors or information from unauthorized sources may be responded to in the following manner:

"We will not confirm until we have been able to check out the information through authorized sources. Once we have confirmed information, we will release it to all members of the press at the same time."

Confidential Information

- ❖ Confidential information is not to be released. This includes:
 - ♦ The names of victims or fatalities prior to notification of next-of-kin. (Identification and cause of death should not be released without authorization from the Coroner).
 - ♦ Home phone numbers of city/county personnel and volunteer emergency workers, and unpublished city/county numbers.
- ❖ Do not release information that might hinder emergency response, prejudice the outcome of an investigation, or pose a further threat to public safety. Examples include:
 - ♦ Personal conjecture about the course of the emergency or the conduct of response.
 - ♦ Speculation.
 - ♦ Demeaning information/statements.
 - ♦ Information that might compromise the effectiveness of response and recovery.

Media Access to the Scene

- ❖ Every effort should be made to allow the media access to the disaster area, consistent with safety.
- ❖ In cooperation with the EOC and on-scene personnel, the Incident Commander may allow media representatives restricted access to the scene, accompanied by a member of the Public Information staff. This should be done with regard to the safety of media personnel, the impact on response, and the wishes and concerns of the victims.
- ❖ The Public Information Officer should not allow media access to the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) except under limited, controlled circumstances, and only with prior approval of the Incident Commander or EOC Manager. Before being admitted to the EOC, media representatives should display appropriate identification and should be escorted by a member of the Public Information staff.
- ❖ If it is not safe or practical to admit all media representatives to the scene, a media "pool" may be created, where media representatives select one camera crew to take video footage for all. If even such controlled access is impractical, a "staged" photo opportunity to tape response vehicles or support activities may satisfy the media's need for video footage.
- ❖ Response personnel must be protected from unwanted media intrusion. Off-shift personnel should be provided uninterrupted rest. It may be necessary to provide security to facilities where response personnel are housed and disconnect the telephones to ensure privacy.
- ❖ Victims and families should have access to public officials without having to face media. Try to provide a secure entrance to the city administrative offices, or arrange a briefing/interview room away from the media.

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- ❖ The media may be allowed access to response personnel at the discretion of the Incident Commander, only if such an interview does not interfere with the response effort.
- ❖ Response personnel should not comment on the incident without the knowledge and consent of the Public Information Officer or IC.

3.2 Notifications

- ❖ The DES Coordinator should notify the County PIO of EOC activation and request that they (or a designee) report to the EOC to coordinate ESF 15 activities.
- ❖ As additional EOC staffing needs become apparent, other support and partnering agency personnel may be asked to report to the EOC to assist.
- ❖ The DESC or his deputy may activate the **EAS** by contacting the **NWS (453-4561 / 2081)** to initiate the message. If phones are down, a message may be hand delivered to the primary EAS station, KMTX, at 516 Fuller Ave. Radio stations and TV stations should copy the message and interrupt regular programming for the broadcast.
- ❖ If communications are down, the most logical source of communications should be the local ARES organization, which is able to provide portable and self-sustained Ham radio communication that can link critical sites such as the EOC, shelters, hospitals and others that may be needed.

3.3 Preparedness

- ❖ Develop plans, procedures/guidelines, and policies for coordinating, managing, and disseminating public information effectively under all hazards and conditions.
- ❖ Develop plans, procedures/guidelines, and policies for coordinating, managing, and disseminating alerts and warnings effectively under all hazards and conditions.
- ❖ Develop programs and systems to process the inflow of public-related information from all sources in a timely fashion.
- ❖ Develop plans, procedures/guidelines, programs and systems to rapidly control rumors by correcting misinformation.
- ❖ Develop community-based mechanisms to support providing prompt, accurate information to the public in the dominant languages of the community and languages and formats appropriate for those with limited language competence, disabilities, cultural or geographic isolation, or vulnerabilities due to age.
- ❖ Develop emergency plans that are community-based and include outreach and education to the public, through community and faith-based organizations and other institutions, to promote individual preparedness based on the risks in their communities.
- ❖ Establish neighborhood pre-disaster and post-disaster information centers at schools, the work place, libraries, shopping centers, places of worship, and other community institutions, to provide information on evacuations and the location of disaster assistance sites.
- ❖ Develop and implement public information, alert/warning, and notification training and exercise programs.
- ❖ Conduct planning with support agencies.
- ❖ Ensure lead agency personnel are trained in their responsibilities and duties.
- ❖ Develop pre-scripted messages in multiple formats.
- ❖ Identify possible locations for a JIC and press conferences.
- ❖ Develop staffing procedures/guidelines and checklists for the JIC.
- ❖ Develop and maintain a list of equipment needed to activate the JIC.
- ❖ Ensure all departments have trained staff to support the JIC.

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- ❖ Ensure all local media outlets are pre-identified and contacts established. Brief them regularly on emergency public information procedures/guidelines.
- ❖ Ensure emergency responders are familiar with public information procedures/guidelines and know how and when to refer the media to the appropriate field or JIC personnel for information.
- ❖ Encourage media involvement in the exercise design process and planning.

3.4 Response

- ❖ Activate emergency plans and mobilize emergency personnel.
- ❖ Conduct rapid assessments for immediate response objectives.
- ❖ Coordinate with the EOC and primary and supporting agencies to develop a flow of information, including situation reports, health advisories, and other public information releases concerning the response efforts.
- ❖ Inform the public of health and/or safety concerns and ways to reduce or eliminate the associated dangers.
- ❖ Provide evacuation instructions and shelter locations.
- ❖ In coordination with the EOC Team, release emergency information as dictated by the situation.
- ❖ Implement a proactive public information strategy to ensure the media's needs are being met.
- ❖ Conduct media briefings on a regular basis.
- ❖ If the situation dictates, activate and staff the JIC.
- ❖ After coordination with the County PIO, release information regarding the emergency or disaster to other county departments and agencies, the media and the public.
- ❖ Resolve any conflicting information & dispel rumors.

3.5 Recovery

- ❖ Provide public information on recovery efforts.
- ❖ Continue to utilize multiple means of communicating public information and education.
- ❖ Provide news releases with major emphasis on:
 - ◆ Types and locations of emergency assistance available including contacts, phone numbers, location(s) (e.g. food and water points), information concerning disaster recovery centers (DRC), and trash and debris disposal instructions;
 - ◆ Public health notices;
 - ◆ Restricted areas;
 - ◆ Movement or travel restrictions;
 - ◆ Contacts and phone numbers for missing persons information;
 - ◆ Contacts and phone numbers for local non-emergency assistance; and
 - ◆ Public safety notices.
- ❖ Continue EOC operations until it is determined that EOC coordination is no longer necessary.
- ❖ Coordinate with the appropriate agencies to deactivate the JIC.
- ❖ Inform public of any follow-on recovery programs that may be available.
- ❖ Return staff, clients, and equipment to regularly assigned locations.
- ❖ Provide critical payroll and other financial information for cost recovery through appropriate channels.
- ❖ Participate in after action critiques and reports.
- ❖ Updates plans and procedures/guidelines based on critiques and lessons learned during an actual event.

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- ❖ Initiate financial reimbursement process for support services.

3.6 Mitigation

- ❖ Conduct hazard awareness programs.
- ❖ Conduct public information education programs.

4.0 Organization & Responsibilities

The following listed agencies are tasked with primary and/or support responsibilities. More specific assignments can be found in the detailed emergency Standard Operating Procedures/Guidelines (SOP/SOGs) that should be developed by each individual organization. *It is understood that agency capabilities are affected by available resources and the size and scope of the incident and that listed taskings will be “as able” depending upon the given situation at the time.*

4.1 Organization

If the situation dictates, emergency public information activities should be coordinated from a Joint Information Center (JIC). Activating a JIC should help County departments and participating organizations coordinate their activities and help to ensure consistent and accurate information is disseminated.

4.2 Responsibilities

ESF Coordinator

- ❖ Provide leadership in directing, coordinating and integrating overall efforts to provide public information to affected areas and populations.
- ❖ Appoint a PIO.
- ❖ Conduct vigorous public awareness campaigns to educate the public of dangers from potential hazards and provide them with information on the actions necessary to save lives and protect property. Stress hazard awareness and personal preparedness.
- ❖ Meet regularly with members of the media to foster a close working relationship.
- ❖ Familiarize the media with this annex. Consider their recommendations to improve it.
- ❖ Evaluate the emergency situation, make strategic decisions, and identify resource needs and secure resources required for field operations.
- ❖ Collect and coordinate information from all private and public sources to monitor overall response.
- ❖ Disseminate emergency information and instructions to the public, to include, if necessary, twenty-four hour telephone numbers.
- ❖ Involve the media in exercises and critiques.
- ❖ Test the EAS at least annually.
- ❖ Conduct and/or coordinate regular press conferences at the JIC.
- ❖ Inform the public through the EAS. Ensure that the EAS is not overly used to cause undue public concern.
- ❖ Determine the need for and activate JIC.
- ❖ Support EOC operations and coordinate support for ESF 15 activities.
- ❖ Request support from other local governments or the State if local resources are insufficient.

Primary Agencies

- ❖ Maintain list of resources available.

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- ❖ Coordinate activities with other agencies identified in this annex.
- ❖ Provide maps, charts, status reports, photos, schematics, or other displays that clarify the emergency or disaster situation in support of press conferences and/or briefings.
- ❖ Monitor media broadcasting articles to check for accuracy. Monitor and log incoming calls for information and rumor control.
- ❖ Notify all affected jurisdictions and stakeholders of the operational and situational conditions and provide frequent and regular status updates.
- ❖ Provide updates for local websites regarding the scope of the emergency or disaster, the impact to the reservation, emergency action steps, evacuation, collection sites, water and food distribution, etc.
- ❖ Coordinate communication resource requests outside of mutual aid agreements with the EOC.
- ❖ Document costs for reimbursement and auditing purposes.
- ❖ Evaluate and review procedures/guidelines to ensure operational readiness.
- ❖ Assist in identifying personnel and resources to support this Annex.
- ❖ Work with LCCO DES to keep this Annex up-to-date.

Support Agencies

Montana Disaster & Emergency Services (MTDES)

- ❖ Coordinate assistance to local government and mobilization of resources per the provisions of the [Montana Emergency Response Framework](#).

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

- ❖ Administers assistance to the state pursuant to [PL 93-288 of the Disaster Relief Act of 1974, Section 417](#), when threat would constitute a major disaster.

ALL

- ❖ Develop applicable SOPs, guidelines and/or checklists detailing the accomplishment of their assigned functions.
- ❖ Maintain up-to-date rosters for notifying personnel and 24-hour staffing capabilities.
- ❖ Maintain updated resource inventories of supplies, equipment, and personnel resources, including possible sources of augmentation or replacement.
- ❖ Participate in drills and exercises to evaluate local capability.
- ❖ When requested, deploy a representative to the EOC to assist with ESF 15 activities.
- ❖ Provide ongoing status reports as requested by the ESF 15 Coordinator.
- ❖ Assist the PIO and JIC by providing pertinent public information for dissemination to media sources and, as appropriate, fact sheets for distribution to the public.
- ❖ Participate in press conferences and briefings upon request.
- ❖ Monitor and log incoming calls for information and rumor control. Monitor media broadcasts and articles for accuracy.
- ❖ Interrupt regular programming and report emergency information as requested by the JIC.
- ❖ Perform other emergency responsibilities as assigned.
- ❖ Document all costs and expenses associated with response and recovery activities taking care to clearly separate disaster related work from daily work in the event that State and Federal reimbursement becomes available.

5.0 Authorities and References

5.1 Authorities

- ❖ See [Section 5.1](#) of Basic Plan.

5.2 References

- ❖ See [Section 5.2](#) of Basic Plan.
- ❖ **Cowley County, Kansas. October, 2008.** ESF-15 Public Information and External Communications.
- ❖ **Grant County, Washington. June, 2007.** ESF-15 Public Affairs.
- ❖ **Lewis and Clark County, Montana. November, 2005.** Section II, Functional Annexes, Annex D – Public Information & Education.
- ❖ **Sanders County Montana. October 2010:** ESF 15 – Public Information.
- ❖ **National Response Framework. January 2008.** ESF 15 – External Affairs.

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Attachment 1: Acronyms

Acronym	Meaning
ARES	Amateur Radio Emergency Services
CCRC	Capitol City Radio Club
CEO	Chief Executive Officer (<i>also Chief Elected Official</i>)
CERT	Community Emergency Response Team
COOP/COG	Continuity of Operations/Government
DES	Disaster And Emergency Services
DESC	DES Coordinator
DRC	Disaster Recovery Center
EAS	Emergency Alert System
EOC	Emergency Operations Center
ESF	Emergency Support Function
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
IC	Incident Commander
ICS	Incident Command System
IMT	Incident Management Team
JIC	Joint Information Center
JIS	Joint Information System
LCCO	Lewis & Clark County
MTDES	Montana Disaster & Emergency Services
NWS	National Weather Services
PIC	Public Inquiry Center
PIO	Public Information Officer
SOP/SOG	Standard Operating Procedures/Guidelines

Attachment 2: Definitions

Emergency Alert System (EAS): The Emergency Alert System replaced the Emergency Broadcast System as the primary digitized warning system for a three county area, which are Lewis and Clark, Jefferson, and Broadwater Counties. The system is designed to provide a 24-hour warning point to the public for emergencies and disasters. KMTX Radio Station (950 AM) is the primary station, with simulcast capability to the other participating local stations. KMTX and the local dispatch center have generators, to enable broadcasting during power outages. This makes it essential for people to have battery-powered radios to receive these important messages during times of emergency.

Joint Information Center (JIC). A facility, established to coordinate all incident-related public information activities, authorized to release general medical and public health response information delivered by a recognized spokesperson from the public health and medical community.

Joint Information System (JIS): Integrates incident information and public affairs into a cohesive organization designed to provide consistent, coordinated, timely information during crisis or incident operations. The mission of the JIS is to provide a structure and system for developing and delivering coordinated interagency messages; developing, recommending, and executing public information plans and strategies on behalf of the IC; advising the IC concerning public affairs issues that could affect a response effort; and controlling rumors and inaccurate information that could undermine public confidence in the emergency response effort. (NIMS)

Public Information: Information provided to citizens before, during, and after emergency situations/incidents specifically including instructions on how to protect personal health, safety, and property or how to obtain assistance.

Public Information Officer (PIO): A member of the Command Staff responsible for interfacing with the public and media or with other agencies with incident-related information requirements. Also known as the Information Officer or IO. (NIMS)

Special Needs Populations:. Includes the elderly, medically fragile, mentally and/or physically challenged or handicapped, individuals with mental illness, and the developmentally delayed. These groups may need to have specially trained health care providers to care for them, special facilities equipped to meet their needs, and may require specialized vehicles and equipment for transport. This population requires specialized assistance in meeting daily needs and may need special assistance during emergency situations.

Target Notification: The 911 Center calling County residents with emergency information.

Attachment 3: Sample EAS Messages

EAS Message #1: Home Shelter

The following message has been released by the Emergency Operations Center:

1. The _____ has announced that an emergency presently exists at _____. Persons living or working within an approximate _____ mile radius of this location are requested to take sheltering actions.
2. There is no need for residents to leave the area in order to take sheltering action.
3. Persons who have taken shelter should observe the following procedures/guidelines:
 - a. Close all doors and windows.
 - b. Disconnect air conditioners or fans.
 - c. Lower the thermostat setting of any heater or turn off air conditioner/evaporative cooler to minimize the intake of external air.
 - d. Keep pets inside, and to extent possible, bring farm animals under covered facilities.
4. People living, working or traveling in the following areas are affected by this request:
(Repeat the list of areas one time, then continue the message.)
5. Persons living, working or traveling in this area should take sheltering action. Persons traveling to home or work should proceed to their destination in an orderly fashion obeying all traffic regulations. Non-residents traveling in motor vehicles should clear the area in an orderly fashion.
6. All persons traveling in the area in motor vehicles should roll up windows, close air vents, and turn off air conditioners. If in an automobile, or when sheltering is not immediately available, improvised respiratory protection may be taken. Place a handkerchief, towel, or other similar item snugly over the nose and mouth until indoors.
7. You are asked **not** to do the following:
(Read statement A., below, if school is in session.)
 - A. You are requested not to telephone or go to the school your children are attending. They are in a covered protected environment and will be bused home when it is safe to do so.
 - B. Do not telephone city, county, state or federal officials directly involved. They will keep you informed of the situation through this station. Do not use the telephone except for medical emergencies.
8. The preceding has been an announcement from the Lewis & Clark County Emergency Operations Center. It calls for all persons living or working within a _____ mile radius of _____ to take shelter. For further information, stay tuned to this station.

(Thereafter, this message should be repeated as often as needed until the station is informed by the EOC to end transmission.)

Section II: Emergency Support Functions

EAS Message #2: Evacuation

The following message has been released by the Emergency Operations Center:

1. The Lewis & Clark County Emergency Operations Center has announced that an emergency condition exists at _____ and recommends the evacuation of all persons living or working within an approximate _____ mile radius of this location.
2. This advisory affects persons living in the following area:
(Repeat the list of affected areas one time, then continue the message.)
3. Please use the following evacuation routes for your neighborhood. If you will need a place to stay, report to the mass care center located at _____.
(Repeat the list of affected areas one time, then continue the message.)
4. If you have housebound persons or invalids in your home and require assistance in moving them, contact the Lewis & Clark County Emergency Operations Center at _____.
5. Please cooperate by checking on persons who may live alone in your neighborhood. If they have no way of providing for their own transportation, please assist them if possible.
6. Persons affected by this evacuation advisory should prepare to spend a minimum of three days (72 hours) away from home and should have with them sufficient quantities of clothing, sleeping bags or blankets, personal care items and prescription drugs for at least this period. Persons evacuating to mass care centers will be provided with food and sanitary facilities. Pets will **not** be allowed inside the mass care centers.
7. Farmers/ranchers affected by this evacuation advisory should shelter their animals and contact the County agricultural extension agent at _____ for further instructions regarding protection of livestock, foodstuffs, and regaining access to the evacuated area.
8. Persons planning to evacuate are reminded to take the following steps prior to leaving:
 - A. Secure your home and property.
 - B. Turn off all lights and electrical appliances.
 - C. Turn down any heating systems (or turn off air conditioning systems).
 - D. Proceed calmly to your destination, obeying all traffic laws and driving carefully.
 - E. Please obey law enforcement officers and others who will be directing traffic along the evacuation routes.
9. The preceding has been an announcement from the Lewis & Clark County Emergency Operations Center regarding recommendation by the _____ for the evacuation of all persons living within a _____ mile radius of _____. For further information, please stay tuned to this station.

(Thereafter, this message should be repeated as often as needed until the station is informed by the EOC to end transmission.)

EAS Message #3: School Evacuation

1. The following message has been released by the Lewis & Clark County Emergency Operations Center. It supplements instructions given to the public concerning the evacuation announcement for an approximate _____ mile radius of _____.
2. Parents with children attending schools within a _____ mile radius of _____ are advised that their children are subject to a separate evacuation plan while school is in session. These schools are _____. Children at these schools will be taken directly to shelter areas. Parents are to meet their children at these shelter areas outside the emergency zone. ***I repeat, children will be taken directly to areas outside the risk area where parents are to meet their children.*** Parents are not to report to their children's schools.
3. Children attending the schools in the risk area will be taken to the following areas where they may be picked up:

School:

Evacuation Area:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

(Repeat list one time and continue the message.)

4. Parents are urged not to telephone or to go to the schools their children attend. To do so will only create confusion. Parents are to meet their children at the previously announced evacuation areas. ***I repeat***, parents are urged **not** to telephone or to go to the schools that their children attend, but to meet their children at the evacuation areas.
5. The preceding has been an announcement from the Lewis & Clark County Emergency Operations Center giving parents instructions on where to meet their children who are attending schools within an approximate _____ mile radius of _____.

(Repeat entire message one time.)

Alternate Message:

“The _____ School has just been evacuated because of a (problem) at the (location). The students have been taken to _____ where they are safe and will be held until it is safe to return to school or to go home at the end of the regular school day.”

Section II: Emergency Support Functions

EAS Message #4: HazMat Incident

The Lewis & Clark County Disaster & Emergency Services brings you the following message:

An accident involving a hazardous material has occurred at the following location:

_____.

Due to the nature of the chemical involved, it is important that those living or working in the following areas evacuate immediately. Those people between

_____ (north/south) and

_____ (east/west) should leave the area immediately.

Before leaving, evacuees are asked to lock their homes and businesses and go to a location outside of the affected area. Or you may go to the following reception center _____.

Those needing assistance can call the following number: _____.

Section II: Emergency Support Functions

EAS Message #5: Street Closures / Flooding

The Lewis & Clark County Emergency Operations Center announces the current storm has caused severe/moderate flooding in several areas of the city/county.

As of _____ today, the following roads/streets are closed:

_____.

Please avoid these roads/streets. If you must travel, use alternate routes. Avoid low-lying roads near streams, creeks, and rivers. Do not drive over a flooded road or bridge. If your car stalls, abandon it immediately and get to higher ground. Be careful of attempting to walk through floodwaters. If floodwaters are moving swiftly, as little as six inches of water can knock you off your feet. Roadblocks will be set up to prohibit access into the affected area.

Again, the following roads/streets are closed:_____

_____.

Section II: Emergency Support Functions

EAS Message #6: Flooding Evacuation

The Lewis & Clark County Emergency Operations Center announces the following message:

The flooding situation may worsen in parts of the city/county. For your own safety, you are strongly urged to evacuate the following areas as soon as possible:

_____.

If time permits, take essential items such as -- **medicine, special foods, personal items, baby supplies, money, and valuable papers** -- but do not overload your vehicle. Secure your home or business before you leave. Check on neighbors who might need assistance.

If you cannot stay with relatives or friends outside of the evacuation area, go to the following shelter:_____.

If you have no form of transportation, or are physically unable to evacuate on your own, ask a neighbor to assist you, or call the following number:

_____.

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EAS Message #7: Snow Emergency

The Lewis & Clark County Disaster & Emergency Services, in cooperation with the National Weather Service, announces a snow emergency has been declared due to the current weather conditions.

A Winter Storm Warning is effective until _____ for the following areas:

At least _____ inches of snow are expected with the storm. All persons are advised to stay indoors and travel only if necessary. If you must travel, take an emergency supplies kit with you.

Again, a winter storm warning is in effect until _____ for the following areas: _____

Section II: Emergency Support Functions

Attachment 4: JIC Initiating Checklist

COMPLETED	TASK	DATE/TIME/INITIALS
<hr/>	Incident Notification Received	<hr/>
<hr/>	Initial EAS Message Issued	<hr/>
<hr/>	EOC Activation Decision Made	<hr/>
<hr/>	JIC Activation Decision Made	<hr/>
<hr/>	JIC Location Selected	<hr/>
<hr/>	JIC Staffing Call-Out Begun	<hr/>
<hr/>	JIC Staffing Call-Out Completed	<hr/>
<hr/>	JIC Operational	<hr/>
<hr/>	Initial Media Release Issued	<hr/>
<hr/>	Initial Media Briefing Begun	<hr/>
<hr/>	Initial Media Briefing Completed	<hr/>

Primary EAS Station

KMTX - 950 AM

516 Fuller Ave

(the EAS is initiated by contacting the NWS (449-5204 or 406-453-4561 / 2081))

Attachment 5: Public Information Office (PIO) Checklist

These or similar responsibilities should apply to any PIO working in the Lewis & Clark County JIC.

Mitigation Phase

- ☐ Stay current or familiar with the latest techniques for emergency management information.
- ☐ Meet regularly with members of the media to foster a close working relationship.
- ☐ Conduct public education and media programs as needed.

Preparedness Phase

- ☐ Maintain close liaison with local, state, and federal PIOs as well as the media to enhance public preparedness and awareness prior to an emergency, and to facilitate dissemination of actual incident information.
- ☐ Participate in emergency drills and exercises to test plans for effective and consistent information release.
- ☐ Attend PIO conferences and training sessions.
- ☐ Compile and prepare emergency information for the public in case of emergency.
- ☐ Become aware of the procedures to utilize the Emergency Alert System. *Persons designated as PIOs may assist in preparation of EAS messages and should monitor all EAS announcements.*
- ☐ Coordinate public education/awareness campaigns with the DES office.

Response Phase

- ☐ Reports to the EOC, upon activation.
- ☐ Contacts the media and informs them about the emergency.
- ☐ Serves as an official Lewis & Clark County spokesperson and the sole source for dissemination of official emergency related materials to the public. *Remind agency heads to clear all releases through you.*
- ☐ Supervises the preparation of emergency announcements for EAS broadcast.
- ☐ Activates the Public Information web site and regularly updates it with the latest information.
- ☐ Coordinates all public announcements with the Incident Commander.
- ☐ Issues news media releases from the EOC, or, if activated, establishes and coordinates all actions at the Joint Information Center (JIC).
- ☐ Provides for briefings with the participation of the CEO and other involved officials.
- ☐ Insures that the Public Inquiry Center has the most current information.
- ☐ Coordinates news releases with parties involved in an emergency and the State DES PIO.
- ☐ Verifies the authenticity of incoming information.
- ☐ Verifies that duplicate or contradictory releases are not being made.
- ☐ Takes action to maintain control of rumors.
- ☐ Coordinates with the American Red Cross to establish a single point of contact for the public to obtain information concerning missing relatives.
- ☐ Public Information Officers should provide news releases that emphasize the following:
 - A clear identification of the affected area

Section II: Emergency Support Functions

- Timely, accurate and easily understood information on the situation.
 - Recommended or ordered protective actions.
 - Descriptions of local, State and Federal response to the emergency.
 - Identification of stations and times for information updates.
 - At the end of an emergency situation, request that broadcast media announce the end of the emergency at regular intervals to ensure complete dissemination to the public.
- ☐ After an emergency is terminated, continue to provide information to the media concerning recovery operations
- ☐ Maintains current files and accurate records of all information released to the public and media which should include, but not be limited to:
- Name, agency, and phone number of the release initiator.
 - Text, tape, or video of the news release.
 - Substantiating information for the release.
 - Date and time information received.
 - Date and time information released.
 - How and to whom the news release was issued.

Recovery Phase

- ☐ Maintain status board.
- ☐ Continue to brief the media about continuing developments.
- ☐ Critique the public information response to the emergency with the media, DESC and agency heads.
- ☐ Incorporate appropriate recommendations to revise the plan.
- ☐ Release available statistics on disaster damage, injuries and fatalities.
- ☐ Inform the public on available assistance - and the location of shelters and disaster assistance centers.
- ☐ Provide the media information on the progress of recovery efforts.